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Cuba/NIC

CUBA-NICARAGUA: Cuban Flood Assistance. (U)

(C/NOFORN) The 25-man Cuban delegation, including First Vice President Raul Castro and six cabinet ministers (DIADIN 159-12A, 8 June), visiting Nicaragua to evaluate the damage caused by recent torrential rains and to offer reconstruction assistance departed on 12 June after a 12-day inspection tour. Prior to his leaving, Castro highlighted the aid offered by Havana:

-- Six construction groups and personnel for repair and building of bridges and roads.

-- Five sawmills for making prefabricated houses along with construction material.

-- Erection of a 150-bed hospital and loan of medical personnel to staff it.

-- Three centers for the building of schools.

(C/NOFORN) The Castro visit was the longest, publicly announced, high-level Cuban visit to Nicaragua. Its length and the aid offered were clearly intended to demonstrate how far Havana is prepared to go to convince the Nicaraguans of the benefits of their close ties with Cuba.

(C/NOFORN) Ostensibly, the new aid will be in major areas where Cuban civilians are already working, notably construction, medical services, and education. Although Castro did not set an exact figure for the number of new Cuban personnel in Nicaragua, it reportedly may include as many as 2,000 construction workers and engineers. The arrival of such a large number of new Cuban personnel in a short period raises the possibility that additional military personnel could be infiltrated into Nicaragua under the guise of assisting in reconstruction efforts. No firm evidence, however, is available to substantiate this possibility. (Revw 16 Jun 88)

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